Geodata Provisioning - Frequently Asked Questions

Future Directions:

Q: When will the service centers be going to the newer version of ArcView 3.x and/or ArcGIS?

A: The service centers will upgrade to ArcView 3.3 as part of the Microsoft XP upgrade scheduled to begin early this year. The NRCS offices will also receive a Customer Service Toolkit 4.0 upgrade at the same time.

As far as upgrading to ArcGIS, RD will most likely start out using ArcGIS as they install GIS software on their workstations. FSA will migrate to the newer version of the software in the next 12 to 18 months. NRCS will likely migrate to ArcGIS during fiscal year 2004, but for the time being NRCS will continue to run ArcView 3.x in the field offices, to be compatible with the Customer Service Toolkit. If there is an immediate need to use ArcGIS in some of the NRCS Field Offices, they can install both ArcView 3.x (for Toolkit) and ArcGIS (for other GIS applications) on the same workstation.

Q: How will the Data Marts be set up?

A: Data Marts will be set up in the Service Center Web Farms. Data Marts are created typically for web applications; however they may also be used to provide data to a desktop application given adequate bandwidth. A data mart is typically a subset of data extracted from a data warehouse to meet a specific business need or application. They are established for the purpose of improved performance and to make it easier to use the data. An example might be an application that requires some but not all of the Soil Survey data. Data Marts are synced with the data warehouses so that when data is updated in the warehouse it is automatically updated in a mart.

Q: Are the State IT/GIS Teams suppose to set up the new global groups in all service centers?

A: No, the IO Lab will set up the new global groups. The State IT staff will assign local users to the appropriate group once they are set up.

Q: When will the new global groups be set up?

A: The IO Lab is planning to establish the global groups in the near future, but there is no definite date set. However, the establishment of the global groups should not delay the delivery or migration of the geospatial data sets. The data can be delivered now, and permissions set at later date, when the global groups become available.

Q: Will the permissions be assigned to the geodata folders with a script, or due we have to manually assign the permissions?

A: Our current plans are to develop a script to automatically assign global groups to the geodata folders.

The Geodata Directory Structure and Filenaming Conventions:

Q: The *Standard for Geospatial Dataset File Naming* has some different file naming conventions that those outlined in the *Manual for Managing Geospatial Datasets in Service Centers.* Will the *Standard for Geospatial Dataset File Naming* be updated to match the other manual?

A: The *Standard for Geospatial Dataset File Naming* will be updated to reflect the new filenaming conventions defined in the *Manual for Managing Geospatial Datasets in Service Centers*.

Q: What does the _ a_ , _l _ , and _p _ designate in the standard filenames?

A: The lower case letter represents the feature type of the shapefile. **_a _** represents area (polygon data), **_l_** represents line data, and **_p_** represents point data.

Q: A lot of people have created folders under the geodata directory. Do we have to go in and change all that?

A: Yes, the shared network servers need to have the standard set of geodata folders established in order to store the national geodata layers identified in Appendix A of the manual.

Q: Can we delete standard geodata directories from the server, if we do not have data to place in them?

A: No, these will be needed eventually, and if they are not, they will be removed or changed nationally.

Q: We have some large counties which contain several topo quads. Currently we keep topographic images under quadblock directories. Are we supposed to put all of these files under a single "topographic_images" directory?

A: Yes, all topo quads should be stored in the topographic_images folder. If you have a large number of top quad files, you may find the Service Center Data Loader, and the Alias Tool helpful in providing a "virtual sort" to organize the topo quads into subcategories when accessing them in ArcView.

Q: We keep our ortho quarter quads on CD. Do we have to load all of them on the server?

A: In order to conveniently share the ortho quarter quads between the service center agencies, it is important to store the data on the shared network server.

Data Issues:

Q: Can you move a county from one zone to another? Can we edit the table that defines what zone a county is in?

A: The Service Center Agencies have agreed that geospatial data for counties will be projected to the **dominant** UTM zone, NAD83. FSA's Aerial Photography Field Office (APFO) and NRCS's National Cartography and Geospatial Center (NCGC) are delivering data according to this agreement. Many orthophoto and digital raster graphic mosaics have already been completed according to these zone designations. We are inclined to stay with these designations unless the state offices have a strong business case for changing specific county designations. UTM zone issues can be referred to Larry Davis, NCGC, at ldavis@ftw.nrcs.usda.gov

Q: Will the Gateway serve SSURGO data in the standard filename?

A: NCGC is currently serving SSURGO files that were prepared and zipped for delivery over its FTP site. Unzipping, renaming and rezipping these files again for delivery over the Gateway would be time consuming. In the near future, NRCS will implement a Soils Data Warehouse for managing its SSURGO data. These data will be stored in a relational database managed by ESRI's Spatial Data Engine (SDE). It is anticipated that files exported and bundled for delivery to service centers will have standard names and proper file directories.

Q: Do we have to deliver all 14 priority datasets? Some we will never use (i.e. elevation, mean annual precipitation) and we don't see the need to deliver them.

A: Yes, if they are available they should be delivered to the service centers. These are a shared set of data. Some data sets such as CLU, Orthoimagery and Soils are more important to current applications such as SCIMS or CST. However, as other local, state and national applications are developed the other data layers will become more important. These data may also be valuable to our district partners for their activities such as wide area assessments.

Q: What happens if we were not able to get all the data delivered by December of 2002?

A: This date was set to be in sync with the migration of all PC's to the Microsoft XP operating system. This migration requires that all files be removed from PC's. If an office currently has no GIS data or need to use GIS, then they can have a lower priority.

The decisions on which offices need to be migrated and where GIS data needs to be loaded on the server should be made by the State IT, GIS and Programs Staffs of the three agencies in consultation with their partners.

Q: What does CLU mean?

A: CLU is the Common Land Unit (field boundaries) data provided by FSA.

Q: Will the CLU data become public information via the Freedom of Information Act? What about other FSA data, i.e. compliance points, wetland data?

A:. In the case of CLU, the current version of the 8-CM states that all data in the CLU, with the exception of HEL status, may be released. The other data will be dealt with on a case by case basis by agency program staffs and leaders.

Q: What is the FTP address for counties to send their CLU to APFO? How often do we need to send them a copy of the CLU?

A: The CLU data may be sent to: ftp.apfo.usda.gov/pub/incoming/clu
The CLU needs to be sent to APFO when it is certified. A timeframe for additional copies to be sent to APFO are being worked out by FSA.

Q: What does the state geodata administrator need to track as far as data that has been delivered to the service centers in their state?

A: They need to keep track of which national datasets outlined in Appendix A of the manual reside on the network servers in each service center.

Q: Is there any kind of inventory tool or script that you can run to find geospatial files on all PCs and servers within a state?

A: No. The Geodata Conversion Utility will search an individual workstation and display a list of all geospatial files it finds on that particular PC, but there is no tool available to do a statewide assessment of what exists on all workstations/servers at this time.

Q: The slides we downloaded from the registration site do not include the urls for the 14 priority datasets. Can you provide that information?

A: The information is included in the slides that were posted on 10/23/2002 at: www.itc.nrcs.usda.gov/toolkit/IT_Updates.htm The URLs are as follows:

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Common Land Unit: www.apfo.usda.gov/imagerystatus.html
Public Land Survey: www.nationalatlas.gov/plssm.html
Flood Zones: http://msc.fema.gov/MSC/states.htm
Hydrologic Units: www.ftw.nrcs.usda.gov/huc_data.html
National Wetland Inventories: www.nwi.fws.gov/
Tiger 2000 Datasets: www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html
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Q: Can anyone access data from the Gateway, or just NRCS and FSA employees?

A: Anyone can access data from the Gateway, it is a public site.

Metadata Issues:

Q: When documenting the bounding coordinates in a metadata file, do the bounding coordinates have to be in decimal degrees?

A: Yes, the coordinates should be in decimal degrees.

Q: Where are metadata files stored?

A: The metadata files are stored in the same subdirectory as the geospatial data layer that they describe.

Q: What is the naming convention for metadata files?

A: The metadata file will have the same prefix as the file it describes, but with a different file extension (i.e. .txt, .xls, .xml) For example: clu_a_ia015.txt would be a metadata file for a corresponding CLU layer.

Q: Are templates available for metadata files?

A: Some states have developed their own metadata templates, but nothing has been done by any of the service center agencies at the national level. The Metadata Team will evaluate the usefulness of standardized metadata templates.

Geodata Conversion Utility (GCU) and the Service Center Data Loader (SCDL):

Q: Where is the GCU located?
A: You can download the latest version of the GCU (revised 10/7/02) at:
www.itc.nrcs.usda.gov/toolkit/IT_Updates.htm

Q: When trying to install the GCU, I get an "error 1607" message. What is causing the error?

A: An H: drive must be configured on the systems for the utility to install correctly. If H: is not set up the 1607 error will occur.

Q: Who can run the GCU?
A: Anyone with administrator privileges can install the GCU. Anyone with write permissions to the Geodata directories on the C: and F: drives can run the utility on the workstation.

Q: Can you run the GCU remotely?

A: Yes, you can run the GCU over NetMeeting, but the utility must be installed on the workstation that is being migrated. The GCU can be installed over NetMeeting as long as the person installing it has administrative privileges on the workstation.

Q: Can you run the GCU more than once on a workstation?

A: Yes, you can run the GCU more than once. You may consolidate or migrate the geospatial files in subgroups, or consolidate/migrate all the geospatial files at one time.

Q: Does the GCU move or copy data?

A: The Consolidate Tool **moves** the data to the geodata directory on the workstation, deleting the original geospatial dataset, unless the original file is designated as Read Only. If the original geospatial file is designated as Read Only, the file is **copied** to the geodata directory on the workstation.

The Migrate Tool allows the user to decide whether they wish to **move** or **copy** the files in the geodata directory from the workstation to the server.

Q: Can the GCU be used to rename files already located under F:\geodata?

A: Yes, you can select the F: drive when you use the Consolidate Tool, then rename the files and update the .apr files accordingly.

Q: Are the temporary reports generated in Notepad by the GCU saved on the workstation?

A: The reports are temporary files and should be saved under a new filename if you wish to preserve them for future reference.

Q: When using the Assign Aliases Tool, where is the scdldata.txt file stored?

A: The scdldata.txt is saved directly on the H: drive on the workstation. This allows users to create a custom alias list for use in ArcView. If several employees wish to use the same alias list, one user can run the Assign Aliases Tool on their PC, then copy the text file to the H: drive on the other PCs for other users to access.

Q: If you have problems during the conversion can you start the GCU over?

A: That depends on what problems develop and where you were in the process when they occurred. If you have not clicked on Commit Changes, you can Exit the Program and restart the Tool you were using (i.e. Consolidate, Migrate, or Assign Aliases Tools.) If the problem occurs after clicking on Commit Changes you may need to reinstall the

original files from a backup and try again. Call your Help Desk support person for Help in solving particular problems encountered while running the GCU.

Q: How does the Service Center Data Loader associate a file name to a virtual name (alias)?

A: The SCDL uses the scdldata.txt file to reference the Assigned Alias to the actual filename for each dataset.

Q: Is the use of the SCDL required?

A: No, use of the SCDL extension is optional.

MISC:

Q: Everything seems to be designed for NRCS and FSA. What are RD's priorities?

A: RD programs staff has been involved in all discussions and decisions related to GIS implementation, including priorities for the data. NRCS and FSA have been working on GIS longer than RD, which accounts for the perception that RD may not be involved. This is changing, and as any of the agencies needs change or become better known, we have the flexibility to make adjustments.

Q: Is the Geodata Management Training presentation available for downloading from the web? The copy we downloaded on the registration site is different than what we saw today.

A: Yes, the complete presentation is available at:
www.itc.nrcs.usda.gov/toolkit/IT_Updates.htm

There is a complete presentation (with all demonstrations) as well as a condensed version (without demos) available. Both were updated and posted on 10/25/2002.